

# FireFighter

The magazine of the Fire Brigades Union ♦♦♦ [www.fbu.org.uk](http://www.fbu.org.uk)

January/February 2012



## 60 and still firefighting?

Why these former firefighters say  
government plans don't make sense See p10





# Matt Wrack

## There is a tough year ahead

I would like to wish all FBU members and supporters a happy new year – I hope you had a decent holiday and at least some time with family and friends.

The year ahead is likely to be a tough one for firefighters. We face continued attacks on our pensions, our jobs and our pay. The economic outlook is extremely grim and that will affect the communities we serve and the people we are there to help. The Cameron government is determined to continue its agenda of making working people pay for the economic crisis. That means its onslaught against public services, against pension rights and against our living standards will continue. What we have to do is stand together in our union to resist these attacks.

### Pensions

Members will know that FBU head office officials spent a great deal of time last year building our campaign to defend firefighters' pensions in the face of the government's desire to make us pay more, work longer and get less.

In December the government finally set the cost ceilings for the firefighters' pension scheme from 2015. The FBU had managed to delay the setting of the cost ceiling, so consideration could be given to various occupationally specific issues, particularly around retirement age. We have never agreed

with the approach of setting a cost ceiling but nevertheless attempted to influence the process once it was under way.

The government issued a cost ceiling for the proposed firefighter scheme. It was set at 27% (employer 13.8%; employee 13.2%) with a proposed accrual rate of 57ths. This accrual rate is higher than in other public sector schemes and we will examine precisely what it means in discussion with government officials. However, the currently proposed "reference scheme" does not in any way address the



*A big FBU contingent joined the demonstration in Nottingham on 30 November*

concerns of the FBU on contributions rates, retirement age or other key matters. We continue to challenge the government on a range of issues and we have raised these concerns with ministers in all parts of the UK.

To summarise the current position: at time of writing there is currently no "offer" on pensions and discussions will continue on the government's proposals and our challenges to them. The union's executive council has agreed to meet early in the new year to hear reports from these discussions.

### Jobs

Alongside the attack on our pensions, the government has

also imposed deep and savage cuts in central funding of the fire and rescue service. These budget cuts, which started in April, have already seen nearly 1,000 firefighter posts cut in the space of a year.

FBU members in many brigades are now campaigning against the next round of cuts. Another 500 posts are threatened – with chief officers predicting another 2,000 threatened after that.

The fire and rescue service already faced cuts under the previous government. So these

new cuts will only add to a hugely underfunded service. The resilience of the service is at stake if these cuts go through. The union will be asking our officials to step up campaigning around jobs in the coming months.

I am sure that we will see major campaigns in every UK fire service against any proposed cuts in the service or in the number of jobs. Our task nationally will be to build the momentum of that campaigning across the UK.

### Threats ahead

We face two other threats ahead that the union is preparing to combat. The

government's autumn statement announced a 1% pay rise ceiling for the public sector for the next two years. This comes after a two-year pay freeze imposed in 2010. The TUC estimates this will cost firefighters and other public sector workers over 16% over four years – a ruinous assault on our living standards.

They have also threatened to introduce localised pay, which would undercut the current national arrangement the FBU has fought for throughout its history. Let no one be under any illusion – they want to drive our pay down to levels not seen in the fire service for generations.

Another threat comes from efforts to privatise parts of the fire and rescue service. These threats come in many guises – the outright use of private firms like AssetCo, the selling off of control rooms and the establishment of mutuals and other types of public-private arrangements. Behind all this stand some big private providers, who believe they can make a profit out of firefighting.

There's no getting away from the attacks we face. But we face them with a strong and united union.

Members of the Fire Brigades Union are renowned for our initiative and strength.

We will have to use everything at our disposal to defend ourselves and the communities we serve in the year ahead.



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PICTURE: ROD LEON



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TIM OCKENDON PA PHOTOS

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### LETTERS

## Brother Steve Wells

Brother Steve Wells, a member in East Sussex, died as a result of cancer. A memorial fund has been established by members in East Sussex and we have issued the following statement about Steve and about the fund:

Facing cancer is the toughest fight most patients will ever have to face. Sadly Steve Wells from Lewes fire station, East Sussex, lost his brave fight against cancer on Thursday 6 October in sudden and extremely poignant circumstances as he died the day before he was due to marry his partner Di.

Steve had worked for East Sussex fire and rescue service for 24 years. With his previous service in the Royal Navy, he had achieved 28 years' pensionable service. As he was a member of the old Firefighters' Pension Scheme and died the day before his wedding, tragically no pension benefits will be paid to his partner or his children.

Steve was an active member of the FBU, serving as a station rep for most of his career. The entire service is shocked and saddened by what happened to Steve.

We ask for FBU members nationally to contribute to the Lewes Fire Station Steve Wells Memorial Fund which will be the only method remaining to provide financial support for his partner Di.

**Account name:** Lewes Fire Station Steve Wells Memorial Fund

**Account number:** 40726428

**Account sort code:** 60-13-04

**Bank name:** Nat West

Please support the appeal.

**Matt Dale**

**East Sussex brigade secretary**



FBU members outside the High Court in London in October while the case was being heard

## Urgent appeal sought on pensions uprate ruling

### Pensions

The Fire Brigades Union and five other unions will challenge a High Court ruling that the government was entitled to switch the measure of inflation used to increase pensions. They will seek an “expedited” appeal against a decision that will cut the value of pensions for millions of retired private and public sector workers.

The move came after two of three High Court judges ruled in December that the government was within its rights to use the consumer price index (CPI) instead of the traditionally higher retail price index (RPI).

One of the judges found that it was unlawful and should be quashed.

FBU general secretary Matt Wrack said: “While the High Court’s split ruling is

disappointing, the unions are pleased that our main argument, that the chancellor was motivated by deficit reduction when he made the switch, was accepted.

“It is encouraging that one judge agreed that this was illegal and we are appealing against the majority decision as a matter of urgency.

“At a time when public sector workers are being forced to bear the burden of the financial crisis, the unions will not allow this unfair and, in our view, unlawful breach of the contracts of millions of workers to rest.

“This case applies to private sector pensioners who are also losing out because of a switch in the way price rises are measured and applied to their pensions.”

The judicial review was initiated by six unions. It challenged the switch to CPI – announced in the June 2010 budget

without any consultation or negotiation. Chancellor George Osborne claimed CPI was the more appropriate measure.

But the unions have always said the switch was a deficit reduction measure and, therefore, unlawful under social security legislation that does not allow national economic considerations to be used when deciding which is the best practicable estimate of the increase in prices.

While all three High Court judges agreed with the unions that deficit reduction was the motivation for the switch, two of them said the secretary of state for work and pensions was within his rights to take into account public finances.

October’s inflation figures put CPI at 5% and RPI at 5.4%, meaning that the loss to existing public sector pensions is around 15%. Ministers have refused to negotiate on the issue.



*Plans to move  
county's control  
twice in two years*

**www.fbu.org.uk**

# Public backs fight for 135 frontline jobs

## West Yorkshire

Firefighters in West Yorkshire have received strong public support for their campaign to defend their jobs and the service after plans to axe 135 frontline firefighters were announced.

The FBU warned of increased risk to lives and homes, businesses and workplaces as a result of the plans.

Ten stations would be closed and replaced with five new builds and seven frontline fire appliances removed by 2017. This would result in around 135 fewer frontline firefighters being available to respond to 999 emergencies.

Yorkshire FBU regional secretary Pete Smith said: "These cuts are the worst we have ever seen and come on the back of serious cuts to the service in recent years. Make no mistake, they are a threat to the safety of the public and firefighters – this is a bonfire of the fire service.

"There are times when we have been

seriously stretched, even with our current resources. These cuts risk tipping us over the edge and that will have a very serious impact on the public."

The union has received overwhelming public support at public meetings organised to oppose these cuts. Hundreds of people attended public meetings in December, with other events planned for the new year.



*West Yorkshire FBU officials David Williams (l) and Mark Wilson*

# Union warns on rush to privatise training

## London

The FBU has called on London's mayor Boris Johnson to delay the proposed privatisation of firefighter training, after the London fire and emergency planning authority recommended a sell-off to the Babcock International Group, which says it is the UK's largest work-based learning provider.

The union accused the fire authority of rushing through a decision on the 25-year training contract worth £18m a year.

FBU regional official Ben Sprung said: "We have major concerns about safety and the long-term financial risks involved with privatising training. In our view the evaluation process was tilted against the in-house bid.

"The decision-making took two months and they plan to have privatised training in place by April 2012. There is a rush to judgment followed by a dash to implement and the timeframe is too tight.

"Training is critical to those who work in very hostile environments

such as the fire service. It is central to the safety of firefighters and we urge the mayor to step in and delay making this decision."

The union said the in-house bid only narrowly missed winning the contract having been blocked from including £8m of potential savings identified before the bidding started.

The FBU has serious concerns about the risks associated with the privatisation, including safety, working conditions and long-term financial implications.

## SOUNDING OFF

### Bolt from the blue heralds FiReControl II

Cumbria control branch secretary Christine Wilson and branch chair Morven Anson say radical change is taking place without proper public debate

Cumbria county council plans to shut its control room in June with the loss of 12 posts and move the work to Cheshire's fire control until 2014 when it would move on to the north west regional control centre.

Staff were given only a week's notice before the plan was put to the council's cabinet. It was a bolt from the blue. The staff had agreed in December 2010 to the loss of three posts – taking staffing down to 12 – to keep Cumbria control safe after the collapse of the FiReControl project.

The council failed to bid for £1.8m of government funding to upgrade its existing control. And while it was planning to move the control to Cheshire it was also making plans to merge the rest of the Cumbria fire service with Northumberland – plans that were recently dropped.

There was no consultation before the decision and no debate by the full fire authority. Public and press were excluded when key financial information was discussed, but it is important to scrutinise the plans, technology and financial details.

The FiReControl project collapsed at a cost of at least £500m, the planning was a disaster and the technology would not work. We have the makings of FiReControl disaster Mark II in the north west.

Cumbria councillors have signed up to pay for the regional fire control centre without the technology being in place, one of the central fault lines of the FiReControl project.

Much is being made of using GPS to direct fire appliances, but GPS is useless when roads are blocked. Road bridges can be swept away – as happened across Cumbria the last time there was major flooding – and, yes, local control crews had to use their local knowledge to keep the public safe.

**FBU demands transparency – page 6**





*FBU members joined two million other public sector workers in the historic day of action on pensions on 30 November. Left: on the demonstration in Cardiff. Above: Ian Murray, FBU EC region 4, speaking at a protest rally in Hull*

## FBU demands transparency on fire control room changes

### Buckinghamshire

The Fire Brigades Union is demanding a full public consultation over fire authority plans to axe Buckinghamshire's control centre.

In September the fire authority decided, behind closed doors, to outsource the Aylesbury control room to Cambridgeshire, over 50 miles away. Other options were dismissed without the evidence being made public or any consultation.

Regional FBU control official Andy Cooper said: "These cuts will see the firefighters and managers working in the Aylesbury command and control room given the choice of either moving their families to the east of England, where they will most likely face redundancy, or object to the transfer and face the sack."

FBU control representative Makyla Greaves said: "The closure of the local emergency fire control room affects the safety of firefighters and everyone who lives, works, travels through, or visits Buckinghamshire."

"The fire authority decision should be in the public domain. There is no reason for secrecy when we are talking about people's lives being put at risk."

### Cumbria

The Fire Brigades Union is demanding to know why Cumbria county councillor Gary Strong did not reveal he was a director of North West Fire Control Ltd at a council cabinet meeting that decided to move fire control from the authority's control room in Cockermouth to his company's regional fire control centre.

There was no suggestion that Strong will get any personal benefit from his position as a director – it is a local

authority controlled company. But he spoke highly of the technology that the company claims it will provide, along with claimed financial benefits.

FBU regional secretary Kevin Brown said:

"Councillor Strong tabled the report and spoke at the cabinet in glowing terms about the alleged benefits of moving to North West Fire Control."

"The claims of the regional control company were central to the approval by the cabinet and I am concerned that he did not declare an interest at that meeting."



*North West Fire Control Ltd says Cumbria, Cheshire, Greater Manchester and Lancashire fire authorities have agreed to collaborate in a single North West centre at Lingley Mere in Warrington (above)*

## IN BRIEF

### Autumn statement misery

The government's autumn statement painted a bleak picture for public sector workers. The chancellor announced that pay increases in the public sector will be capped at an average 1% for the two years following the current two-year pay freeze. The TUC calculated that this leaves public sector workers facing an average 16.5% cut in living standards by 2014-15.

George Osborne announced a review of "how public sector pay can be made more responsive to local labour markets", with a view to fragmenting national collective bargaining arrangements.

There was also grim news on jobs. The Office for Budget Responsibility estimated 710,000 public sector job losses between 2011 and 2017. Last March it predicted 400,000 job losses.

### FBU wants hybrids out of service

South Yorkshire fire crews have asked for controversial new vehicles to be taken out of service until a full investigation into serious safety failures has been completed. There are a host of safety concerns. The CARPs (combined aerial rescue pumps) have been dogged by problems since they came into use in the UK.

The Fire Brigades Union issued a Safety Critical Notice on 3 November to South Yorkshire fire service and crews are refusing to use the rescue platform on the hybrid vehicle. There have been continuous problems with the vehicles since their introduction in South Yorkshire.

The FBU believes the vehicles are a threat to the safety of crews and public.

**Station Cat – page 23**

### RDS compensation

The Fire Brigades Union is concerned over misleading claims about compensation payments to retained firefighters. FBU executive council member Tam Mitchell said: "The claims being made about these compensation payments are wrong and will mislead retained firefighters and the public. This is the result of a long-running legal battle won by the FBU at the House of Lords and then at a later tribunal."

"The range of compensation payments starts at £150 and the maximum possible amounts are £750 for a firefighter, £778 for a crew manager and £806 for a watch manager, if you are eligible under the agreement. The compensation payment will be made without deduction of tax or national insurance contributions and is not pensionable. Each individual payment is being calculated on a case by case basis. Fire authorities are setting aside money to pay compensation for their previous unlawful actions."





*On message: (l to r) Lucy May, Val Hampshire and Clare Hudson*

# FBU women lobby MPs

Denise Christie, FBU executive council member for women, reports on important campaigning on pensions

Women are not only being ignored by this government – they are being attacked. Of the billions of pounds that are being saved, the majority is coming directly from women. It is easy to see why there are more millionaires in this government than mothers!

It is mostly women who work in and rely on public services. The government's attacks on public servants, including firefighters, are clear to see with the current job losses, pay cuts and detrimental pension reforms. Making women bear the brunt of deficit-cutting measures makes a mockery of the government's claimed commitment to fairness.

The pension changes will make it even more difficult to recruit and retain women in a fire service that desperately needs them. Women still make up less than 4%

of the fire service and that figure is likely to get worse if these changes are pushed through without amendment.

With this in mind and as part of the pensions campaign, the FBU's national women's committee and head office organised a women members' lobby of Westminster MPs.

Wednesday 9 November saw women firefighters lobby their MPs over the government's controversial pension reforms. Briefing notes were sent out before the lobby and campaign packs were distributed on the day with information for the MPs to read and act on.

Women members contacted their MPs and asked to meet them to discuss the issues they had with the proposed pension reforms. Each MP was asked to

**Members gained experience in communicating with MPs and lobbying**

read the information, sign an early day motion (EDM 2049) and write to Treasury chief secretary Danny Alexander raising concerns and ask a question in parliament.

Over 20 MPs attended the lobby. This included MPs without constituents in attendance who had heard from other MPs about the lobby and turned up to find out what the issues were.

The lobby attracted media attention and West Midlands women's rep Leanne Byrne was interviewed for BBC Radio 4. Union News website also ran an article on the lobby with some Twitter feminist organisations blogging about it.

A video blog was filmed for FBUTube and the FBU website. The day was very successful, not only for the number of MPs lobbied, but also for women members who gained some experience in communicating with their MPs and the importance of lobbying.

Since the lobby we have had MPs writing letters to Danny Alexander raising our concerns as well as signing EDM 2049. Further commitments to raise a question on our behalf in parliament have also been received.



**VIEW**  
FROM THE  
AERIAL LADDER  
PLATFORM





# M5 crash – ‘It felt like the longest night ever, but it was only minutes’

Called in as “a van on fire” on the M5 near junction 25, it turned out to be one of the worst scenes of carnage ever witnessed on UK roads. There had been immediate fatalities but others were trapped in vehicles with fire bearing down.

Two pumps, with 12 wholetime and retained firefighters, made it to the scene in the initial stages. Other crews racing to the scene were held up in miles of gridlocked traffic that had built up rapidly.

Large refrigerated lorries and cars were well alight. Some survivors were trapped face down in spilled fuel while others were trapped in cars and the cabs of lorries.

As they carried out rescues and pulled cars

away, it was often to find even more cars with more people trapped underneath.

Faced with that level of carnage and immediate life risk, the crews used a combi-tool and hooligan bars to free those trapped as fire was bearing down.

The crews rapidly reverted to using car jacks taken from the boots of crashed cars to lift vehicles and free those trapped, at least one lorry exploding near crews carrying out rescues.

Crews had two tanks of water to fight the fires as they were rescuing those trapped. The dangers were so immediate that split-second decisions were made in what was a hugely dangerous situation for those

trapped and their rescuers.

One of those on the scene said: “If we’d taken a defensive stance we’d have lost more people, we had to totally commit to what was a very dangerous situation or there would have been more fatalities.

“There was not the luxury of time we have at most RTCs as fire was rapidly bearing down, this was split-second risk assessment using the personnel and equipment we had available.

“Everyone went well beyond what was required. For those who were first at the scene it felt like the longest night ever – we were physically and emotionally drained – but it was only minutes.”



PICTURE:  
TIM OCKENDEN/  
PA PHOTOS



# Five more years?

**“You can’t do as much as you get older, your body tells you when you’ve had enough, some will find they can’t do it”**

**T**here are good common-sense reasons why frontline firefighters should be retired by the age of 55. People do not expect the firefighters called out to save them from a blazing house to be pushing 60.

And it’s not ageist to suggest that the public is entitled to expect younger crews at the peak of physical fitness. Or that firefighters deserve dignity in retirement.

But the government seems intent on going ahead with plans to ratchet up the retirement age to 60 and beyond for those in the Firefighters’ Pension Scheme. Frontline firefighters could find themselves having to work an extra five years from 2015.

The recommendation comes from Lord Hutton’s report on public sector pensions, in a cost-cutting drive that seems to fly in the face of not just common sense but research and best practice in occupational health at home and abroad.

Experts warn it would not even save money. The expected rise in early retirements on medical grounds – as a result of the later retirement age – could well wipe out cost savings on pensions.

*Three retired firefighters from South Yorkshire explain why this would be a bad deal not just for those forced to work on but for the public that firefighters spend their working lives protecting. Their words reinforce the union’s position that the retirement age of 60 in the New Firefighters’ Pensions Scheme introduced in 2006 is five years too late.*

## **Struggling**

Ivor Ridgill, Ralph Shields and Ned Robinson donned fire kit and posed for a photograph outside their old fire station in to make the point that firefighters should be allowed to retire with dignity. Ministers should listen to these former frontline firefighters who have a wealth of experience behind them.

Ivor Ridgill, a former South Yorkshire station manager, retired at 51, after 30 years’ service. He doesn’t mince his words: “I was struggling many times by the end, to be honest. It was frustrating. You want to put your heart and soul into the job. But, towards the end I could only give it 85 or 75 per cent. I just didn’t have the physical agility I used to.”

Firefighters deserve dignity in retirement, and the public deserves to be served by fit, active and agile firefighters, Ivor, now 63, argues. “I’m sorted myself,

but I want to speak out because making firefighters work longer is just not right.”

He is candid about the effects of ageing. Reaction times can start to slow from 45. He speaks from personal experience.

“Your body tells you when you’ve had enough,” says Ivor, who continues to serve his local community in retirement as a primary school governor. Like many firefighters, he was a keen sportsman in earlier life.

He represented the fire and rescue service at rugby union at national level – playing for England – as well as being picked for county sides West then South Yorkshire.

He hung up his rugby boots at 43. Crawling was becoming problematic, as his knees were giving him problems. He feels it would have been hard to sustain more arduous tasks such as hose-running and ladder work if he had not retired when he did.

“You can’t do so much as you get older,” he says, “and if people have to work until they are 60 there’ll be those who find they can’t do it at all.”

There are worrying implications for the public and firefighting colleagues, he warns. “If you are going to have to work an extra five years as an operational



*Ivor Ridgill, Ned Robinson and Ralph Shields*





firefighter, you might not be putting just yourself at risk, but other people too.”

#### **‘It just got worse’**

Former colleague Ralph Shields “loved every minute” of his job as a South Yorkshire firefighter. But he had to retire aged 54. Longstanding lung problems were affecting him.

Ralph was finding it increasingly hard to fight fires in heavy smoke, heat and water spray – the kind of conditions every firefighter has to be ready to face. “It just got worse,” says Ralph, now 65 and just starting to draw his state pension. “I had to leave a year early. There is no way I could have carried on.

“Muscles get weaker as you get older – things you took for granted before get harder. It can’t be a good idea to force firefighters to stay on until they’re 60 or beyond, 55 should be the maximum – it’s probably the best time for most

firefighters to leave. I loved the job, but left at 54. My lungs weren’t up to it. I would never finish as well as when I started.”

#### **Timing was perfect**

Ned Robinson left the job bang on 55. “I certainly knew I’d had enough by then,” he says. “If I’d stayed on any longer, I’d have been really struggling. I was starting to feel my age in a really big way. The timing was perfect for me. I don’t know what would have happened if I’d had to work until I was 60.

“I’m sure we’d manage if we had to. But the chances of us falling over, collapsing or having a seizure become much higher the older you get. There’s the adrenalin rush when you are called out to a job, you have to work very intensively in short bursts in high temperatures. It can put tremendous strain on the body, the older you get. And I don’t expect the public

would want to be rescued by a bunch of 59-year-olds if they had a choice.”

Ned, now 59, drove the fire engine and fought fires during his time in South Yorkshire FRS. In his last three years as a firefighter, he had to have time off sick. He says he feels sorry for firefighters who may well find themselves having to work an extra five years before they can retire. “It can be a very demanding job both physically and mentally. I consider myself lucky being able to retire when I did,” Ned says.

“For someone feeling the strain who’d banked on having retirement coming up and being told they’ll have to put in another five years it would be some kind of hell.”

#### **Informed debate**

Before the government presses ahead with this ill-thought-out plan, there should be a properly informed debate.

By sharing their experiences, Ivor, Ralph and Ned have made an important contribution.

Firefighters and the public should make sure that firefighters are not forced to stay on when they are no longer physically up to the job. And that they retire with a decent pension. After all, they’ve earned it.

**To be approaching retirement and to be told to do another five years would be some kind of hell**

# Government proposals on pensions do not address our **KEY CONCERNS**

**Pension discussions with ministers are still ongoing. *Firefighter* explains the recent developments**

**T**he Fire Brigades Union's campaign to defend firefighters' pensions reached an important new stage at the end of last year and the union expects more developments early this month.

The main developments are:

- A new firefighters' pension scheme, with working longer and career-average calculated benefits from 2015
- Consultation on proposed increased contributions from April 2012
- Changes to the local government pension scheme for control members
- A court decision on uprating pension benefits for inflation.

## **New firefighter scheme**

The main developments have been around Westminster ministers' plans for a new firefighters' pension scheme to run from 2015. The government wants firefighters to pay higher contributions, work longer and still receive lower pensions at the end of career. The FBU believes these proposals are unfair and unsustainable.

The government has now issued a cost ceiling for the proposed firefighter scheme. This fixes the proportion of pensionable pay it will contribute to our pensions over the long term. This has been set at 27% (with the government, as employer, paying 13.8% and the employee paying 13.2%), with a proposed accrual rate of 57ths. The accompanying

documentation includes a government "preferred scheme design". FBU officials and our actuaries have been examining the proposals very carefully, including the possibilities of an earlier retirement age for firefighters.

FBU general secretary Matt Wrack said: "The government has not addressed the key concerns of the union. We produced detailed and robust arguments and they have not been adequately addressed. We have written to the minister outlining our concerns at the limited time available to conclude negotiations. On many of these issues the government needs to look again at the evidence we submitted which sets out major threats to the viability of the scheme. We are pursuing the issues of concern as a matter of urgency and will keep members informed."

## **Discussions**

The government has said that the cost ceiling is "indicative". It has stated that the announcement of the cost ceiling and related documentation is the start of the latest stage of discussions and should not be seen as a final position. The union will be issuing its response, including our own preferred "scheme design", based on the union's policies on pensions.

The FBU originally called for a delay in setting the cost ceiling for the firefighter scheme, so that consideration could be given to various occupationally specific issues, particularly around retirement age. The firefighters' cost ceiling was set on







**“We produced detailed and robust arguments and they have not been adequately addressed”**

7 December, while other schemes had cost ceilings set in October (and revised again on 2 November).

The government said it wanted negotiations to be finished by the end of 2011. The union wrote to the government saying it was unreasonable to ask for agreement by the end of the year and that the union would work to its own timetable.

### **Contributions**

An immediate bone of contention between the FBU and the government is over its proposal for a 3.2% increase in pension contributions, which it plans to phase in over the next three years starting from April 2012.

The FBU has submitted a detailed response to the government on this issue. The union argues that the proposed increases in pension contributions are completely unjustified. The planned increases are unfair in the current economic situation, particularly with a high cost of living and because firefighters already pay among the highest contributions of any public sector workers.

The union also believes the increases will be self-defeating financially. If members opt out of their pension scheme, this would undercut the expected revenue. The increased contributions are a tax on public sector workers, a deficit reduction measure where any revenue raised would not even go towards members' pensions. The government is expected to respond on this issue early in January this year.

### **Other developments**

The FBU has also been representing control members in the scheme-specific discussions for the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS). The consultation dates vary for other schemes, with a consultation deadline of 6 January for the LGPS. The LGPS cost ceiling was originally set in October at 17.8% and then changed upwards to 20.4% on 2 November.

The union is also appealing against the December High Court decision on the way pensions are uprated for inflation. While one of the three judges said the government's decision to use the consumer price index (CPI) instead of the traditionally higher retail price index (RPI) was unlawful and should be quashed, the other two decided that the government was within its rights (see page 4).

Matt Wrack said: “To summarise the current position, there is currently no ‘offer’ on pensions and discussions will continue on the government's proposals and our challenges to them. The FBU's executive council has agreed to meet early in the new year to consider reports from these discussions. Should any significant or urgent developments occur, the executive council will reconvene earlier.”

More information: The FBU's circulars, submissions and other information are available on the union's website [www.fbu.org.uk](http://www.fbu.org.uk)



# FBU advances campaign for new flood law

**The new duty on emergency response to flooding in Northern Ireland shows why it is needed in England and Wales as well**



SIMON FARR



**E**ighteen people, including children, had to be rescued by firefighters from flooded houses near Omagh, Northern Ireland last October. With flood incidents like this on the increase, it's no wonder that politicians in Northern Ireland listened to the Fire Brigades Union and brought forward legislation to make flood response a legal duty in the province.

The Fire and Rescue Services (Emergencies) Order (Northern Ireland) 2011 came into force on 1 January this year.

From now on the fire board in Northern Ireland has to make provision for "serious flooding", rescuing people trapped or likely to be trapped by water and protecting them from serious harm. The new law is almost identical to one passed in Scotland in 2005. But fire authorities in England and Wales are not yet required to respond to major flooding – an anomaly that increasingly makes no sense.

#### **'It shows what is possible'**

Jim Quinn, FBU brigade secretary in Northern Ireland, said: "We welcome the introduction of this new law on flooding, which the union has campaigned for over many years. It shows that it is possible to convince politicians and civil servants of our case."

The new law in Northern Ireland is the result of consistent campaigning by the FBU. For the past five years the union has been speaking to local politicians about the need for a duty to respond to flooding. With more flood incidents in recent years and the expectation of more to come with climate change, there is no doubt about the risks to local communities.

The FBU also made an important contribution to the consultation process when the emergencies order was announced – not least because the original draft did not include flooding. But following the union's intervention, officials at the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety listened to the union's arguments and amended the law to include flooding.

#### **Key recommendation**

"We now want to see the equipment and training provided to our members so they can carry on rescuing people in our communities safely," said Jim Quinn.

The new law in Northern Ireland implements a key recommendation of the Pitt review of the 2007 floods. It means that two of the three devolved UK administrations have now made it a statutory duty for the fire and rescue service to respond to flooding.

The FBU is pressing ministers in England and Wales to change the law and bring all services into line with Scotland and Northern Ireland.

The FBU's case is strengthened by a recent National Audit Office report. It found that over 5.2 million (one in six) properties in England are at risk of flooding from rivers, the sea, or surface water and that the annual cost of flood damage in England is already at least £1.1bn. Even the government accepts that the risk of flooding is only going to increase with climate change.

Cuts in central government budgets mean that Defra (Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs) has cut capital investment for flood defences by 27% from £354m last year, to £259m for each year of the spending review.

With less spent on flood defences, there will be more work to do for the emergency services when floods hit.

The FBU's arguments were also backed by the final report of the flood defence assessment, Exercise Watermark. Published in October, it acknowledged the challenges in tracking and managing flood rescue assets and concluded that fire and rescue services and other parties needed to "use their resources better, decide whether there is enough resource and to consider how best to coordinate with others".

A wide range of emergency planners and responders said that the exercise "showed that the amount of resource needed is not fully understood for the impact of a severe, wide-area emergency".

The key recommendation in the report was that Defra should work with other government departments "to clarify how local and national flood

## **'At a time of austerity, anything that is not nailed down in law risks being cut in the desperate attempts to balance budgets'**

rescue assets should be coordinated, for example statutory duty ..."

FBU national officer Dave Green said: "The FBU has met with ministers and MPs to press the case for a statutory duty in England and Wales.

"We think the Exercise Watermark report underlines the point firefighters are making. We need a law so that firefighters get the necessary training and equipment to rescue people during floods. It's as simple as that.

#### **Much more needed**

"Although there has been some money spent on boats and swift water rescue kit, we know that much more is needed for major flood incidents.

"Local FBU officials are still saying that money should be invested to train more firefighters and equip our members properly to deal with these emergencies.

"At a time of austerity, anything that is not nailed down in law risks being cut in the desperate attempts to balance budgets.

"For the sake of national resilience it is absolutely vital that every fire service in the UK is duty-bound to prepare for and respond to flooding and to be fully funded to do so."





# Job cuts threaten life and national resilience

**Firefighter jobs are threatened by budget cuts announced by chancellor George Osborne. And more cuts are threatened**

**G**overnment cuts threaten thousands of firefighter jobs and will close fire stations and put the public at risk, according to the latest information on fire authority budgets.

The FBU is calling on firefighters to campaign against these cuts which threaten to pulverise the fire and rescue service.

The first round of cuts saw over 1,000 frontline posts lost by April 2011. The second wave is now getting under way. On top of this already planned onslaught, the chancellor dropped a bombshell in his autumn statement when he announced that there would be another two years' worth – £30bn – of public sector cuts. But he did not say where the cuts would fall.

FBU general secretary Matt Wrack commented: "The very fabric of our fire and rescue service is under attack from central government cuts. The FBU will



## Job cuts 2011-13

	GMC	Merseyside	W. Yorks	W. Mids	T&W	S. Yorks	Total
<b>Wholetime</b> firefighters	75	92	82	120	58	41	<b>468</b>
<b>Non-uniformed</b>	75	73	67	105	29	35	<b>384</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>165</b>	<b>149</b>	<b>225</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>852</b>

Source: The Metropolitan Fire and Rescue Authorities response to the Government Resource Review



be at the forefront of campaigning to defend the fire and rescue service.”

Last year's local government finance settlement imposed an overall 5.8% cut on the fire and rescue service in England for the two years 2011-12 and 2012-13. Overall, six of the English metropolitan fire authorities (Greater Manchester, Merseyside, South Yorkshire, Tyne and Wear, West Midlands and West Yorkshire) were hit twice as hard as the combined fire authorities (see *Firefighter*, March 2011).

### Olympics

The metropolitan authorities shouldered nearly two-thirds of the cuts in English fire and rescue services outside London in the first two years.

But London is also being hit, with £50m of reserves handed to the Metropolitan Police and a further £65m in cuts expected to kick in with earnest after the Olympics.

These cuts mean that metropolitan chief officers have earmarked more than 450 wholetime firefighter jobs for cuts between 2011 and 2013 and more than 800 jobs from the service as a whole (see table).

Chief officers in the metropolitan authorities are warning that a further £80m cut from 2013 threatens the jobs of around 2,000 firefighters as well as the closure of 50 fire stations and the loss of up to 100 appliances. They say these cuts are “unsustainable” and would lead to “life-threatening reductions in fire cover and national resilience capacity”.

The FBU believes that this probably understates the threat – the cuts could cost thousands more firefighter jobs.

### Across the board

Metropolitan authorities are not the only ones that face budget pressures. Some combined authorities, such as Cambridgeshire, Cleveland, Durham, Nottinghamshire and Shropshire, were also hit with the maximum cut in the first year.

There is no comfort for any fire authority. The Westminster government is “backloading” its cuts. This means that those hit less hard in the first round may receive the hardest settlements for 2013-14 and 2014-15.

Matt Wrack said: “This is not about redistributing funds from an ever-shrinking pot, but securing decent funding for the whole of the fire and rescue service. The FBU recognises that the English metropolitan authorities have taken the biggest hit in the first round of cuts and we believe this will have a devastating effect on our members’ jobs and on the quality of the service.”

He added: “Every fire and rescue service is facing the pinch. Firefighters want the service funded properly, not a race to the bottom where no one wins.”

FBU officials are highlighting pressures on budgets across the UK that have potentially devastating effects. For example, Gloucestershire fire and rescue service plans to cut nearly one in eight full-time frontline firefighters.

Budgets for 2012-13 will be set in the first months of this year. The FBU believes it is vital for firefighters to lobby politicians to make the arguments for our service.

### Campaign trail

With two of the metropolitan authorities and all four of its fire and rescue services under pressure, the FBU's Yorkshire and Humberside region is on the campaign trail.

Ian Murray, FBU executive council member for Yorkshire and Humberside, said: “We have had some recent successes when fighting cuts to the fire service. In Humberside we ran a successful campaign to oppose fire station closures, by getting organised and getting local members involved.”

“We set up a campaign committee with an open invite to all branches to send a rep along. We organised collecting signatures for petitions, the signing of ‘letters of objection’ and built up to a mass rally and march attended by 500 firefighters and local trades unionists, which really raised public awareness.”

### Getting organised

Greater Manchester is also getting organised in the face of cuts. Brigade secretary Paul Fogerty said: “We are facing a minimum budget deficit of £23m in the next four years due to the disproportionate funding cuts to the metropolitan brigades.”

“Despite ministers stating that no frontline posts are to be lost, we face a reduction of over 250 operational personnel in the next couple of years.

“Involving the wider membership, we have begun a campaign to increase public awareness of the dangers of these cuts. It includes using the media, leafleting local communities and writing to councillors and MPs.

“We also have our own website, which shows where the cuts will hit hardest and directs individuals to their local politicians with their contact details.”

In 2012, firefighters will need to step up campaigning to defend jobs and defend the service.

# Asbestos

## Westminster government isolated

*The motivation was to save billions*

Ian McFall, head of asbestos policy at Thompsons Solicitors, looks at the implications of a recent Supreme Court ruling

Firefighters and retired firefighters with the asbestos-related condition pleural plaques face a postcode lottery for compensation after the Supreme Court ruled that the Scottish Parliament and the Northern Ireland Assembly had the right to pass laws for the benefit of their citizens.

People in England and Wales diagnosed with the same condition continue to be unable to pursue compensation against their former employers.

The welcome decision by the UK's highest court was made in response to a challenge by the insurance industry to the lawfulness of an Act of the Scottish Parliament – The Damages (Asbestos-related Conditions) (Scotland) Act 2009.

### What are pleural plaques?

The Act was passed in order to reverse the decision of the House of Lords in 2007, in a case called *Rothwell v Chemical & Insulating Co Ltd*, to end compensation for pleural plaques – a scarring of the lining of the lungs caused by exposure to asbestos.

Pleural plaques seldom

cause any physical symptoms. However they represent irreversible structural damage to the lungs. Someone diagnosed with plaques will, understandably, suffer anxiety due to the increased risk of going on to develop a more serious or fatal asbestos-related condition.

Firefighters may know former colleagues who have died from mesothelioma, the cancer of the lining of the lung caused by asbestos.

It was accepted by the courts for 20 years, until challenged by insurers, that pleural plaques did constitute personal injury which should be compensated. The insurers' motivation was, of course, to save billions by preventing tens of thousands of people with plaques from making claims against negligent employers.

### Court rulings

The Law Lords agreed with the insurers that the presence of pleural plaques did not constitute an injury which could give rise to a claim. The right of pleural plaques sufferers throughout the UK to pursue compensation was ended.

The Scottish government acted swiftly to restore the right to compensation for Scottish citizens. The effect of its Act was to declare that pleural plaques are a personal injury for the purposes of a claim for damages.

The Northern Ireland Assembly took the same approach and passed a similar act earlier this year.

In unanimously rejecting the insurers' appeal, the Supreme Court delivered a ringing endorsement of the

legislation in Scotland (and Northern Ireland). The insurers – Axa, Royal Sun Alliance, Zurich and Aviva – claimed the legislation was incompatible with the European Convention on Human Rights and so was outside the legislative competence of the Scottish Parliament. They also said that it was an “unreasonable, irrational and arbitrary” exercise of the legislative authority of the Scottish Parliament.

But the court accepted that the legislation served a legitimate social policy aim and was a proportionate means of achieving it. It also accepted that Scottish pleural plaques sufferers who were directly affected by the insurers' legal challenge had a right to object to it.

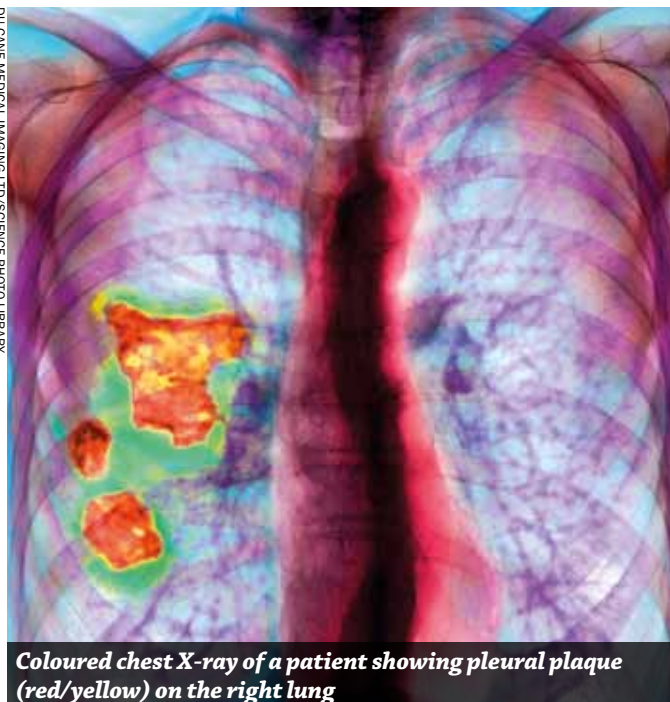
### Democratic rights

This decision recognises the democratic right of the Scottish Parliament to legislate for the benefit of its citizens. In Scotland the rights of people with pleural plaques are more important than the commercial interests of insurers, which is how it ought to be.

The failure of the Westminster government to act leaves it isolated.

Only the discredited arguments of insurers and politicians could attempt to justify why people in Scotland and Northern Ireland whose lungs have been damaged by asbestos are entitled to compensation while those suffering from the same condition in England and Wales are left without a remedy.

DU CANE MEDICAL IMAGING LTD/SCIENCE PHOTO LIBRARY



**Coloured chest X-ray of a patient showing pleural plaque (red/yellow) on the right lung**



# Legal Beagle

## What are my rights as a father?



**Q My partner is pregnant and I would like to take time off to help look after the baby. As a father, what are my rights?**

**A** Parents of children born since April 2011 (and parents of adopted children matched on or after that date) have the right to "share" the mother's maternity leave.

This means that a mother can transfer the last six months of her 52-week maternity leave to the father if she decides to return to work before the end of her leave.

As with current paternity leave, (which only lasts for two weeks), additional paternity leave extends to partners and civil partners of mothers.

This is intended to give families greater flexibility in how they choose to look after their children.

The rules state that:

- Fathers who have been employed continuously for at least 26 weeks will be entitled to up to six months' extra leave, which can be taken once the mother has returned to work.
- Some of the leave may be paid if taken during the mother's 39-week maternity pay period at the same rate as statutory maternity pay.
- Parents will be required to "self certify" by providing details of their eligibility to their employer. Employers and HMRC will both be able to carry out further checks of entitlement if necessary.
- The leave can start from 20 weeks after the baby's birth (or adoption) and must end



SATOSHI KAMBAYASHI

12 months after the child is born (or adopted).

- The minimum period of leave is two consecutive weeks and the maximum is 26 consecutive weeks.
- Strict notice provisions will apply to leave entitlement.

**Q Is there a duty on brigades to find alternative employment for someone unable to carry out their duties due to ill health?**

**A** Employers have a duty to consider redeploying employees who are not able to carry out some or all of their former duties, unless the medical evidence indicates there is no possibility of the employee being fit to return to work.

In considering whether or not an employer has acted reasonably, an employment tribunal will take into account

the size of the employer

and resources available to it. For an employer the size of the fire service, it is likely to be unreasonable for the employer not to have at least considered suitable alternative employment.

Suitable vacancies should ordinarily be on the same terms and conditions. However, if the only job that is available is on a lower rate of pay or of a lower grade, an employer will not necessarily be acting unfairly if an employee is dismissed because they do not wish to take up the lower status or lower paid post.

Where an employee is on long-term sickness absence due to a disability, in certain circumstances an employer may be acting unfairly if it fails to create a post to assist the employee to return to work.

An employer who fails to allow a disabled employee to return to work on a phased basis may also be held to have

discriminated against that employee by failing to comply with the obligation to make a reasonable adjustment.

An employer may also act unreasonably if it fails to consider ill-health retirement as an alternative to dismissal.

**Q I bought Christmas presents over the internet, some were not what I thought I had ordered and some did not arrive. What are my rights?**

**A** Goods bought over the internet should match any description the seller has given. If goods are substantially different to the description on the website, you will be entitled to reject the goods and claim a refund. The goods should also be of satisfactory quality and fit for the purpose they have been sold for. If they are damaged or faulty then, again, you can reject them and claim a refund.

Buyers have the right to change their mind, even if there is nothing wrong with the goods and to get their money back. They may have to pay for the cost of returning the goods to the seller. Orders must be cancelled (unless they are perishable items or unsealed audio, video or computer discs).

If orders are not delivered within 30 days of being placed then you will be entitled to cancel the order and claim a refund.

For more information on consumer rights go to: <http://tinyurl.com/62kbslq>

# 'Once the article appeared, the phone never stopped ringing'

## Jason Jenkinson recounts an unforgettable trip in solidarity with US firefighters

### Remembering 9/11

Sheffield firefighter Jason Jenkinson has vivid memories of watching the horrors of 9/11 unfold on television after coming off nights on red watch at the city's central fire station on 11 September 2001. The carnage seemed unbelievable as first one, and then another plane flew into the World Trade Centre's twin towers.

"Flames were leaping out of the towers and firefighters were piling in," says Jason, who got straight on the phone to friend, fellow firefighter and biker Richard Barr. In common with millions in front rooms and offices across the world, the two South Yorkshire firefighters watched aghast.

### Honouring fallen comrades

Ten years to the day, Jason and Richard were among a group of 32 UK and two New Zealand firefighters standing alongside New York colleagues in Riverside Park, not far from Ground Zero. Firefighters from many countries gathered to honour the 343 firefighters who died attempting to rescue people trapped in the burning buildings.

"It was a very moving ceremony," says Jason, who had visited the World Trade Centre as a tourist 18 years earlier. "It took 40 minutes to read out the name of every firefighter who died. A bell was rung for each one and there was a sea of flags in the park, commemorating each individual. The daughter of one of those who died sang. It felt a real honour to be there."

The firefighters' remembrance ceremony was held as relatives of people from 90 countries who died at the World Trade Centre held their own commemoration at Ground Zero.

### Visit to America

For Jason, Richard and the other UK firefighters, New York was the final stop on a very special trip to America: visiting all 9/11 crash sites by motorbike as guests of American Firefighters Motorcycle Club (AFFMC) who have been making the commemorative ride from Chicago annually for the past nine years.

It would not have happened if Tony Smith, FBU



Jason, kneeling front left, with colleagues at Ground Zero

### Rest break on the way to Pennsylvania

Hertfordshire brigade secretary, trade union internationalist and keen motorcyclist, had not blazed the trail in 2010, linking up with AFFMC members from Chicago and joining them in the ride to New York.

The trip went so well that Tony was invited to return with UK motorcycling colleagues from the FBU for the tenth anniversary trip. Tony recounted his trip in *Firefighter* (June 2010) and asked if there was any interest out there.

And there certainly was. "Once the article appeared, the phone never stopped ringing," says Tony. The trip was on. Flights and motorbikes were booked. "The British Firefighters Motorcycle Club (BFFMC), a recognised chapter of the AFFMC, was officially launched on 9 September when we made our inaugural ride out of Chicago," recalls Tony who is president of the BFFMC.

Jason Jenkinson, who has served for 15 years at Sheffield Central, and Richard Barr, now at Maltby station, were keen to join, visit the crash sites, ride through spectacular scenery and bond with American colleagues. The experience did not disappoint.

"We were treated like kings by the American



**'I reckon there were around 4,000 bikes on the trip'**





### JASON JENKINSON

*Sheffield firefighter Jason Jenkinson was one of several who responded to an article in Firefighter asking if any motorcycling enthusiasts were interested in visiting the United States as a guest of the American Firefighters Motorcycle Club*

firefighters,” said Jason. “They were grateful that we’d made the effort to come – but we should have been thanking them. It was a privilege to be there and the hospitality was amazing.

“The trip was incredible. The police and the fire service shut the roads off while we drove out of Chicago with police escorts. It was the same when we got to Washington, where we laid a large poppy at the Pentagon. By the time we got to New York I reckon there were around 4,000 bikes on the trip, with more joining in Pennsylvania.”

#### Rescue 1

Jason won’t forget his visit to Rescue 1, a New York Fire Department unit that responds when rescue operations need special equipment and training (lift shafts, for instance), not far from Ground Zero. A small group were invited by firefighters who had suffered terrible loss. “It was quite hard to swallow what these guys had been through. They’d lost 11 colleagues, some from the day shift, some from the night shift. News of the twin towers attack broke at shift change-over time. The day shift was just coming on but the night shift said: ‘We’ll

**‘It was a privilege to be there, the hospitality was amazing’**

**‘I’m sure now there’s been this ride there’ll be more to come now the club has been formed’**



*Richard Barr and Jason Jenkinson (right) with New York’s One World Trade Center in the background*

go with you’ and went out on the job. Quite a few never came back. There were photos on the wall. Feelings were still quite raw ten years on.”

Jason, who normally rides a Harley Davidson Sportster 883, hired the much bigger Harley Davidson Road King for the trip, clocking up 2,356 miles over 13 days. There were some pillion riders on the ride – including a female firefighter from Leicestershire – and a serving policeman in the UK group.

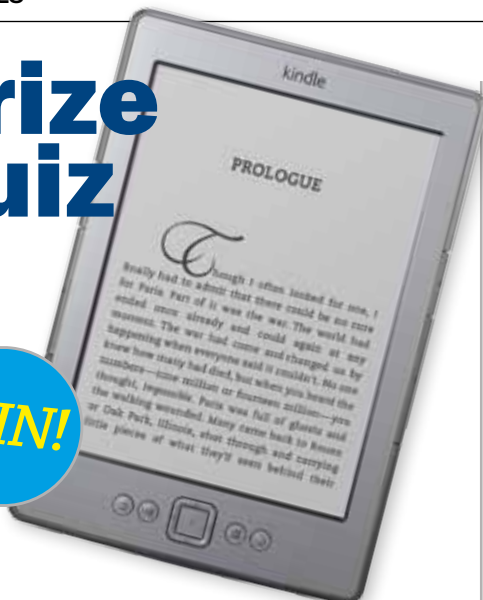
“Tony played a pivotal role. We travelled as a group and did everything together,” says Jason, who was interviewed by South Yorkshire media while on the trip. “I’m sure now there’s been this ride there’ll be more to come now the club has been formed.”

There certainly will. The BFFMC will play host to AFFMC members in summer 2013, if all goes to plan. There will be rides to Scotland and a visit to Omaha Beach cemetery in Normandy – where many American troops landed, and lost their lives, during the D-Day landings in 1944.

Not to mention the possibility of another trip to the 9/11 sites in 2015.

www.bffmc.org

# Prize quiz



## Win the new, smaller, lighter, faster Kindle with built in wi-fi

To win the new Kindle please send your answers by 29 February 2012 on a postcard to: Prize Competition (Jan/Feb 2012) FBU Head Office, Bradley House, 68 Coombe Road, Kingston upon Thames, Surrey KT2 7AE. Please include your name, address and membership number. The winner selected at random from all correct entries.

**1** Which American president said the following, "Fellow citizens, we cannot escape history"?

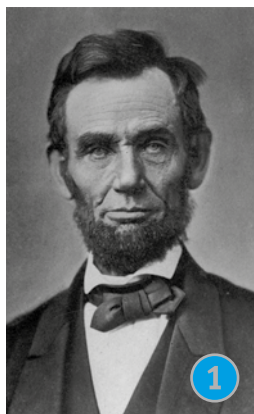
- A. Abraham Lincoln
- B. George Bush
- C. Bill Clinton
- D. George Washington

**2** Which of the following philosophers said, "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles"?

- A. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel
- B. Friedrich Nietzsche
- C. Karl Marx
- D. Aristotle

**3** Which famous playwright said, "There is a history in all men's lives"?

- A. Tennessee Williams



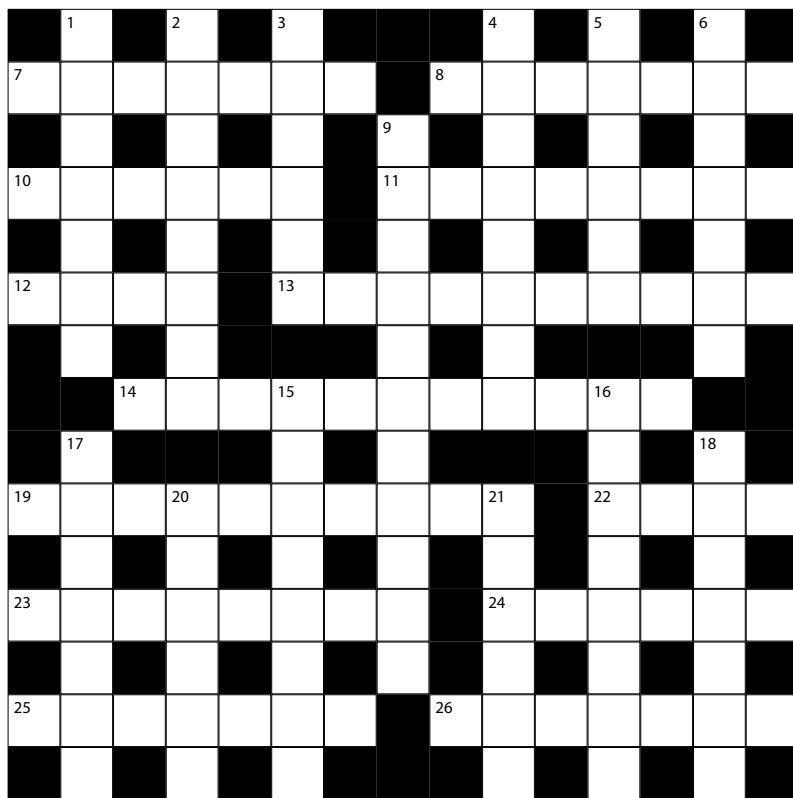
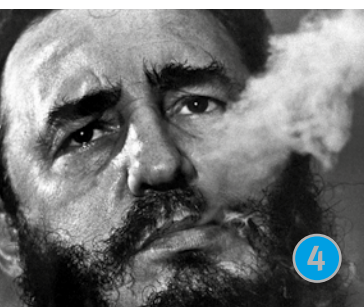
- B. George Bernard Shaw
- C. William Shakespeare
- D. Moliere

**4** Which famous revolutionary said, "History will absolve me"?

- A. Che Guevara
- B. Fidel Castro
- C. Emiliano Zapata
- D. William Wallace

**5** Which famous author wrote, "History is strewn thick with evidence that a truth is not hard to kill, but a lie, well told, is immortal"?

- A. Maya Angelou
- B. Anton Chekhov
- C. Oscar Wilde
- D. Mark Twain



## CROSSWORD

### ACROSS

- 7** Government's 6 plan, part 1 (3,4)
- 8** But (7)
- 10** Eight pints (6)
- 11** Amaze, gobsmack (8)
- 12** Property of fire (4)
- 13** Not drinking, at all (2,3,5)
- 14** Not permanently (11)
- 19** Former fictional TV school (6,4)
- 22, 21** Government's 6 plan, part 2 (4,6)
- 23** (Highly) charged: full of expectation (the kettle could be!) (8)
- 24** Almost (6)
- 25** Government's 6 plan, part 3 (3,4)
- 26** Retribution: best served cold? (7)

### DOWN

- 1** Confection made by heating sugar (7)
- 2** You'll have to break eggs to make one (8)
- 3** Spanish fascist dictator to 1975 (6)
- 4** Shoes etc (8)
- 5** Painful condition in which internal organ protrudes through abdominal wall (6)
- 6** Deferred wages, under attack (7)
- 9** Artist's greatest work (11)
- 15** Painful inflammation of pleural cavity around lungs (8)
- 16** Legislator (8)
- 17** Wheeled stretcher, shopping cart (7)
- 18** Three-part work (7)
- 20** Ms Kidman, actor (6)
- 21** See 22 (6)

## Last month's answers and winners



### Crossword solution November/December

### November/December quiz answers

- 1. D. Oliver Cromwell
- 2. C. Jacob Farley
- 3. A. Silent Night
- 4. C. Cake
- 5. B. 364

Winner of the October quiz  
Martin Bonner, Hartlepool



# Station Cat

## The fat cat with a public service pension

**Francis Maude:**  
£41,000 a year  
of public service  
pensions  
and lower  
contributions

PICTURE: STEFANO CAGNONI



### Sharing the pain

Here's a memo from our "we're all in it together" department. Francis Maude speaks for the government on pensions, and tells us how anyone in the private sector will feel envious of public sector pensions. One person who has no reason for envy is Mr Maude, who will get a massive private pension when he reaches retirement age in 2018. Between 1992 and 2011 he was a director of 27 companies: six were dissolved and three went bust.

From 1993 to 1997 he was also managing director of investment bankers Morgan Stanley in London and New York. There, the highest director's salary went from £786,873 in 1994 to £1,708,063 in 1996. Maude's salary is not disclosed, but, as MD in two countries, he will have been one of the highest paid – and will get his pension on top of that. He's not disclosing the size of that pension. Perhaps next time he's interviewed, someone might ask him. The wealthy Mr Maude gets *his* public sector pension as a convenient top-up: a pension, for having been an MP for 28 years, of about £31,000 a year, for which his contribution this year is actually falling, not rising, and a minister's pension of £10,000 a year. We're all in it together, but some of us are deeper in than others.

### Dutch carriage

There's nothing the station cat likes more than a carp, unless



*As much use as a ... combined aerial rescue pump?*

it's a nice bit of plaice. But that's not how they feel in Doncaster, where CARP stands for combined aerial rescue pump. We told you last time about how the crew had been forced to stop on the way to a fire in order to put out a fire on their own CARP. Now comes news that as a Doncaster CARP's crew lowered its cage to the ground, the boom buckled so badly that the whole appliance has had to go back to Holland for more expensive repairs. Local firefighters have built their own alternative – see picture, above – which, they say, is a lot more useful.

### Comment not free

You'll never guess what happened to most of the money the Chief Fire Officers Association got from the government for professional advice last year. Oh, you guessed. Yes, it was FireControl which absorbed £362,246 of the £576,533 the government paid for professional advice. In other words, they might as well have burned the money. How do we know? Because the Public Accounts Committee asked CFOA for details of the payments during the

investigation into one of the most disastrous projects ever.

### When is a chief ...

Hereford and Worcester's former chief fire officer Paul Hayden cost the county enough when he worked for it. He's costing it a fortune now he's retired.

A new report from district auditor Grant Patterson says that Mr Hayden's bungled retirement has cost the public purse £247,000. The actual cost is higher than that, but insurance policies will meet the rest.

Here's what happened. Mr Hayden wanted to retire when he reached the age of 50 in May 2010 on a bumper tax-free pension. He told the fire authority that he did not think he needed its permission, and the authority agreed.

The view was based on a legal quibble: chief fire officers need permission to retire at 50, but brigade managers do not, and for these purposes, Mr Hayden contended he was a brigade manager.

Then FBU brigade secretary Pete Hope raised the alarm – and the fire authority belatedly took legal advice and found that Mr Hayden probably did need permission, after all. This, said Mr Hayden, would have

unwelcome tax implications for him – enough, he said, to have put him off the idea of early retirement if he'd known. He had to be compensated.

Mr Patterson puts it succinctly: "As a consequence, over the next five to six years approximately £247,000 that could have been used to support public services in Herefordshire and Worcestershire will now need to be paid to meet the tax penalties for making unauthorised payments; the costs of professional advisers; and to reach a compromise settlement of the claim for loss from the outgoing CFO."

Pete Hope puts it even more succinctly: "They are patting themselves on the back for a job well done, but if I hadn't made a fuss it would have cost far more. The fire authority has been found wanting – they only do what the CFO tells them."

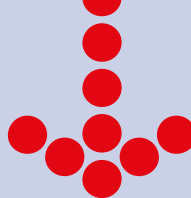
### Join the club

Another memo from the "we're all in it together" department. The former chief fire officer for Lincolnshire, Mike Thomas, spent £26,768 in a year for 12 trips to countries including the USA, New Zealand, Japan and Canada.

Apparently he authorised his own expenses. He often travelled business class. One of his flights, to Wellington, New Zealand, cost £3,999 on a Club World British Airways ticket – but another, presumably more junior, council employee travelled to the same city on an economy ticket costing £783. School transport in Lincolnshire has been drastically cut to save money.



# 25-year badges



**Paul Layfield** (l), Durham, receives his 25-year badge from brigade chair Lee Brown



**Tony Grufferty** (l), Durham, receives his 25-year badge from Durham brigade chair Lee Brown



**Peter Siberry** (l), Durham, receives his 25-year badge from brigade chair Lee Brown



**Tony Collier** (r), white watch, Torquay, receives his 25-year badge from brigade membership secretary Andy Gould



**Steve Whitehouse** (l), Lichfield, Staffordshire, receives his 25-year badge from regional secretary Chris Downes



**Roger Gerry** (r), white watch, Torquay, receives his 25-year badge from brigade membership secretary Andy Gould



**Andy Peart** (r), North Lincs Community Protection Unit, Scunthorpe, receives his 25-year badge from regional secretary Pete Smith



**Graham Quickfall** (l), branch rep, green watch, Immingham East station, receives his 25-year badge from regional secretary Pete Smith



**Steve Critten** (r), red watch, Cromwell Road station, Grimsby, receives his 25-year badge from regional secretary Pete Smith



**Carolyn McArdle** (l), and **Helen Wallace** (r), Durham control, receive their 25-year badges from brigade secretary Tony Curry



**Andy Partridge** (l), red watch, Torquay, receives his 25-year badge from branch secretary Scott Atkins



**Pete Wolf** (r), green watch, Paignton, receives his 25-year badge from brigade membership secretary Andy Gould



**Dave Nott** (l), Torquay, receives his 25-year badge from branch secretary Scott Atkins



**Gary Millson** (l), Lincolnshire, receives his 25-year badge from officers section chair Tim Joyce

Please send photo prints or digital files to: Firefighter, FBU, 68 Coombe Road, Kingston upon Thames, KT2 7AE or firefighter@fbu.org.uk. Please include **full details** for every picture – full names of everyone who is in it; their station/brigade/watch etc; where they are in the picture (eg: left to right); their union posts/branch if relevant; and where and when it was taken.

## FBU regional offices

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### Change of address or next of kin

Advise your Brigade Organiser of any change of address and Head Office of changes to next of kin or nominations for benefits.

## FBU FREEPHONE LEGAL ADVICE LINE 0808 100 6061

The line provides advice for personal injury, family law, wills, conveyancing, personal finance and consumer issues.

For disciplinary and employment-related queries contact your local FBU representative.